been put in the OGL category in the Exim Policy.

Decline in Offtake from PDS

*115 SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA:
SHRI N. GIRI PRASAD:

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the offtake from the Public Distribution System has declined to about 13 million tonnes, compared to 20.8 million tonnes in 1991; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) and (b) The offtake of rice and wheat from the Public Distribution System (PDS) was 18.7 million tonnes in 1991. In the year 1994, the total offtake of rice and wheat was around 13 million tonnes. The lower offtake of foodgrains from the PDS is due to various factors such as continued local availabitlity of foodgrains on account of high production of wheat, rice and coarse grains in three consecutive crop years since 1992-93 and the narrow gap between the PDS retail price and open market prices in many parts of the country.

Steps to Protect Interests of Rubber Growers

*116. SHRI RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to allow duty free import of 50,000 tonnes of natural rubber in 1995-96;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken to protect the interests of rubber growers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM):

(a) to (c) Since early 1995, persistent reports were received by the govt. of a gap between demand and supply of nature rubber in the domestic market leading to depletion of stocks. Moreover, there was a steep increase in prices reaching an all time high at Rs.6,550 per quintal for RSS-IV in mid-June, 1995 as compared to Rs.2,851 per quintal in June, 1994. After considering all relevant factors and the view points of all concerned including Rubber Board. growers and user industries, Govt. permitted import of 38,450 tonnes of natural rubber by 31-8-95 to ensure edequate availability and to stabilise the domestic market during the current lean season.

To protect the interest of Rubber Growers, Rubber Board has been implementing successfully various development and R & D schemes to increase production and productivity of rubber in order to minimise the need for import.

Foreign Exchange Earned Through Export of Consultancy Services

*117. MAULANA OBAIDULLAH KHAN AZMI:
SHRI SANJAY DALMIA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the total foreign exchange earned through export of consultancy services during each of the last three years;

(b) whether the consultancy services operating under public and private sectors in the country are facing crisis due to foreign consultatns in each of the foreign aided projects;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether a conference on the development of consultancy trade in the developing countries was organised by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation in Geneva;

(e) if so, the details of main recommendations made therein; and

(f) the reaction of Government thereon?